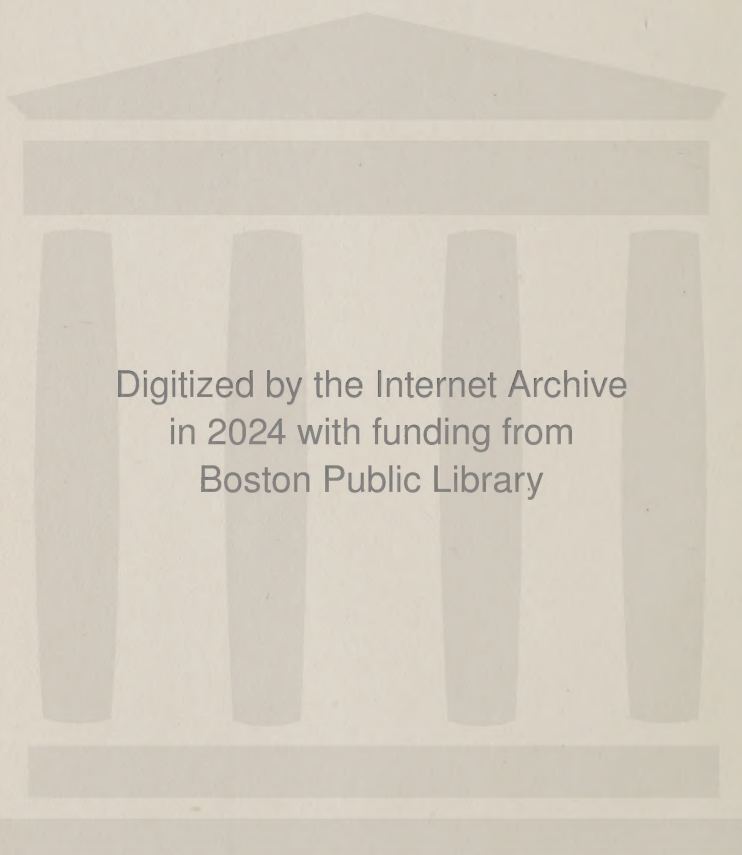


CLOUD BOAT STORIES



Olive Roberts Barton





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CLOUD BOAT STORIES



CLOUD BOAT STORIES

BY

OLIVE ROBERTS BARTON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

MILO WINTER



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CLOUD BOAT STORIES

I

THE CLOUD BOAT

CLOUD BOAT STORIES

CHAPTER I

THE CLOUD BOAT

NURSE REENIE washed Billy's face, hands, and knees, and brushed his hair until it was all smooth and shining, before she put on his snowy white pajamas. Of course he had had a fine bath in the big white bathtub in the afternoon, but somehow knees and hands will get dirty, especially if you have an Uncle Tom like Billy's who plays bear with you and rolls you all over the floor after supper. And faces, too, gather up dirt quickly when the dessert is all fluffery sugary stuff that *will* stick in places, even though you're wiped and wiped with a big napkin after you are through eating.

"Rock me, please," pleaded Billy when Nurse Reenie took his hand and led him toward his little white bed, with soft pillows that looked like the islands on "floating-island" dessert. You know what that is, don't you? — smooth, sweet, yellow

stuff with big, white, frothy things all over it that melt away in your mouth almost before you can taste them. Well, Billy's pillows looked like that. They were so clean and downy you would wonder how he could ever wait to dig his little head into them. It really makes me yawn to talk about those lovely pillows.

But Billy was like lots of other little boys. He didn't like to be left all alone in bed while downstairs he could hear Mamma and Daddy and Uncle Tom, and the company if there were any, laughing and enjoying themselves without him. It is not a very comfortable feeling to know that other people don't miss you one weeny little bit, and can go ahead and talk and have a splendid time without you, while all the time you are ever so lonely in a quiet room upstairs.

"Rock me, won't you, please?" begged Billy again when they had almost reached the bed.

"Rock a big man like you, darlin'! Big men don't get rocked. Just babies! Billy's not a baby."

"Please!"

"No, honey."

Suddenly Billy had an idea. "You forgot something, Nursie. If I tell you, then will you rock me?"

"Bless the lamb! What did I forget?"

"If I tell, then will you rock me?"

"Maybe, I'll see."

"Promise."

Nurse Reenie smiled. "All right, honey, I promise. What did I forget?"



"My teeth! You did n't brush them."

"Why, I did forget, did n't I! Come along, then, dear, and we'll attend to the little white prancers. Then for a ride."

In a few minutes Billy was on Nurse Reenie's comfortable big lap with her strong arms around him, swaying back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, the big rocker creaking cozily as Nursie sang: —

"Little stars are winking
'Long the milky way.
Sandman comes a-blinking,
'Cause it's bright as day.
Kisses all the kiddies,
Shuts their little eyes,
Takes them off to Dreamland
Up among the skies."

Once or twice Billy yawned. He was getting very sleepy. Back and forth, back and forth, went the big rocking-chair. How comfortable he was!

All at once he noticed something. He had thought he was quite alone, — except for Nurse, of course, — but now right beside him was a little man, not any bigger than Billy himself, dressed in a little green suit that fitted him snugly from his neck to his toes. It did n't stop at the

knees as a little boy's trousers do, nor even at his shoes like those of big men. Dear me, no! It kept on going right out to the end of his toes and then some more, for there was a big point on each foot much longer than his toes could possibly be. The little man's cap was green, too, and it covered his head all over clear down to his neck, — all except his face, of course, — and on top was another long point like the ones on his feet. The point was flopping and flapping, this way and that, for the little man was bobbing his head at Billy with all his might as though he were trying to attract his attention.

Billy sat up and looked very hard. Certainly this was the very funniest person he had ever seen, but as the little man kept nodding at him in such a friendly way the little boy nodded back. He was just going to ask the strange little man who he was, when suddenly he noticed the thing he was standing in. It was bright and white, and all through it were streaks of gold like the clouds on summer evenings that you see away up high in the sky about the time the sun is going to bed.

Indeed, it was a cloud, he decided, a beautiful bright cloud that was shaped just like a boat, and it was rocking back and forth just like a real boat

on wavy water. Billy knew because Uncle Tom had one that he took him riding in, out on the river; and the little green man had oars, too, exactly like Uncle Tom's, to make the boat go, — long pieces of wood with wide flat ends.

Billy looked back at the little stranger, and this time he said politely, "How do you do! It's a fine day to be on the water, is n't it?" — just as he had heard people say to Uncle Tom when they could n't think of anything else.

"This is n't water. It's the sky," corrected the green man quickly. "But we'll come back to that again when we've more time to talk. The thing just now is to get you out of this. Do you think we can manage? Do you get sea-sick? I mean do you get sky-sick?"

"I don't know. Is it anything like mumps?" asked Billy curiously. "I've had them."

"Goodness, no!" declared the little man. "But we'll not wait to talk about that either; there is no time just now, and after all it is no worse than rocking in a chair. If we don't hurry, every single place will be shut up, even 'Wait-Awhile-Said-Slow' will be gone. Here, give me your hand and hop in, won't you? That's the boy! Sit right there now and don't move. I'll do all

the rowing." And he helped Billy into the boat, where the little boy sank down into the softest, loveliest nest of cloud cushions that one could imagine. The rocking of the boat was very pleasant, indeed, it was so smooth and soothing.

"The sky is just about right to-night," went on the little man, giving a shove with one of his oars. "We should have a pretty fine trip."

"To-night!" said Billy in surprise. "Why, I thought it was day. It's all so bright."

"It's dark away down on the earth, of course," explained his host, "but we are up in the sky, remember, and the stars make it light up here all the time. By the way, I forgot to tell you my name. Very careless of me, but blame it on the hurry. I'm Sand Man."

"Why, I thought —" began Billy.

"Yes, I know what you thought, that I was old and wrinkled and always dressed in an old brown coat, and carried a bag of sand over my shoulder. It's a shame the pictures they make of me in the books, enough to scare all the children to death! Brown coat, indeed! I hate brown." And Sand Man flicked an imaginary speck of dust from his bright green suit with his middle finger and thumb.

"Oh!" cried Billy with awe. "Are you really Sand Man? And do you really put people to sleep, and are you —"

"There! There! We're talking too much and we've really got to hurry. You are asking



too many questions, too. But so you won't be frightened I'll answer one of them. I do like little boys and girls very much. Do you think that if I didn't I'd bother giving you a nice ride like this?"

"I don't suppose you would!" answered Billy.

"No, siree. But I've been keeping an eye on

you lately, and I decided last Saturday a week ago that I was going to take you around with me a bit on some of my travels just because you are learning to do what you are told. That's the kind of children *I* like."

"Thank you!" said Billy. "Are we going on travels, did you say?"

"Yes, if everything is all right. I just got my boat fixed, you know. It's been out of order for several days." And Sand Man began to row through the sky for dear life. "Mind you keep your hands inside and don't look over the edge. We're all safe enough if we don't get caught on a star point and spring a leak. It takes careful steering to the star of St. Ives and Seven Wives. That is where we are going first because they have been teasing me to death to take you on a visit. They like you because Mother Goose has been talking to them about you and telling them how good you've been. Indeed, I have several very pressing invitations for you, Billy, from the star folk. It looks to me as though Mrs. Goose's tongue has been working as fast as her broom. Now, I can't talk any more as I have to watch my boat."

II

ST. IVES AND SEVEN WIVES

CHAPTER II

ST. IVES AND SEVEN WIVES

ALL over the sky, right in the direction Sand Man's boat was moving, were great patches of light — so very bright indeed that Billy had to blink like everything if he looked at any of them.

Billy was very curious to know what they were, but Sand Man was busy with the oars making the cloud boat move along through the sky, so he thought he had better not ask any questions just then.

But by and by, as they came quite close to one of the big shiny things, Sand Man suddenly reached into his pocket and held something out to Billy. "Take these," he said, "and be careful not to lose them. They are magical glasses through which you can look at the stars without hurting your eyes. That's a star there!"

Billy put the glasses on just as he had seen his grandfather do many and many a time. There were hooks for over the ears and all. "My!" he exclaimed when he was able to have a good long look at the big star without blinking. "Is n't

that a whopper! I always thought stars were little like — like sugar."

"Well, they aren't! How do you like the glasses?"

"Oh, they are fine! I can look and look and never wink my eyes once."

Suddenly the boat was lifted, exactly like Uncle Tom's boat when a big wave came along, and carried straight toward the star, almost crashing into it. Indeed, Sand Man had to take an oar and push with all his might against the star to keep the boat from touching it.

"These waves! These dreadful waves," he kept muttering. "If I'm not careful we'll be wrecked."

Billy did n't see any waves, though he could feel them. He was just going to look over the side when he remembered what Sand Man had said about moving, so he sat still.

Finally they left the star behind and Sand Man sighed loudly with relief. It was such a loud sigh that Billy felt that he was expected to say something.

"Were the waves very bad?" he ventured.

"Very!"

"I did n't see any. I remembered that you said not to look over."

"That's a good little boy. The last little girl I brought for a ride looked over."

"Oh! What did you do?"

"Nothing. But I shall never bring her again."



I give only good little children nice rides in my boat. She was n't good because she did n't mind."

"I'm very glad you think I am good!"

"You are n't always, but you were to-day."

Especially to-night when you allowed Nurse to brush your teeth. You stood very still." And he started to row again as hard as he could.

"Don't try to look for waves. You can't see them anyway," he said before long to Billy.

"Oh! Are they magical waves?"

"No. Only air!"

"How funny!" laughed Billy.

"Sh! Don't laugh. Little Boy Blue is asleep and you will wake him up. He lives in there." And Sand Man pointed to another star they were passing just then with a high gate on the side next to them.

Through this gate Billy could see a hay-field and several hay-cocks. A pair of feet were sticking from under one of them. "That must be Little Boy Blue," said Billy. "I wonder if the sheep are in the meadow and if the cows are in the corn."

"Of course they are!" declared Sand Man indignantly. "That boy is the limit; too lazy to attend to his job!"

After that they did n't come very near to any of the stars. The boat kept rocking just enough to make it pleasant, and as Sand Man kept on rowing very fast they shot along through the sky at a great rate.

Suddenly Billy thought of something. "Do all the stars have gates?" he asked.

"No. Cloud boats cannot go near some of the big stars. They would be wrecked. But nearly all the nice stars have gates for people to enter. We passed Little Boy Blue's Star back there. Over there is Little Jack Horner's Star, and there just ahead is Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son's Star. I'll take you to all of them sometime. To-night we are going to the Star of St. Ives and Seven Wives as I told you. They are expecting us, but we are very late. I hope we can get through the gate."

Before long they came to a very bright star with a gate much higher than any Billy had seen. Sand Man steered the little boat straight for the gate and held out his hand as the boat stopped.

"Come on, Billy! Here we are."

Billy stepped out of the boat on to the bright steps leading up to the gate, and when Sand Man had tied the boat so it could not get away he put his hands to his mouth and called, "Hoo-a-la-hoo-oo! Hoo-a-la-hoo-oo!"

Immediately the golden gate opened itself and they stepped inside the star. Then the gate shut behind them.

Billy was looking around curiously when all

at once he saw some funny little ladies coming toward him. They were dressed very queerly, all in green dresses and yellow caps, and each one had an armful of odd-looking little bags.

They did n't pay any attention to Sand Man, but ran straight for Billy.

When they had kissed him in turn on each of his rosy cheeks, they put all their little bags in a



neat pile and took hands, forming a ring with Billy in the middle. Then they sang a little song which went like this: —

“ Oh, Daffy Down Dilly,
Here 's dear little Billy,
He 's come to the land of St. Ives.

Where there 's pies, cakes, and candy,
And everything dandy,
That 's made by industrious wives."

"Uncle Tom said the wives were not going to St. Ives. He said the man with all the cats and sacks and wives and things was going the other direction and that—"

Suddenly he spied Sand Man shaking a finger at him and putting the other hand over his lips. That meant to keep quiet, so he stopped. He felt that he must be saying something rude. It never does to hurt people's feelings. But the little wives had not heard him, and sang their song once again, dancing around him all the while.

At last they stopped and went over to the pile of sacks and started to open them. And then the most delicious smells began to tickle Billy's nose. It was like chocolate drops and frosted cake and vanilla ice-cream soda and caramels all mixed into one.

Then Sand Man stepped forward. "Let's show him the kits and cats first. We'll have to be going before long and he can eat these in the boat."

"Very sensible," remarked one little wife, closing her sacks again. "Come, Billy. This way, please."

She took his hand, and Sand Man and all the others followed. They went along a narrow

street, and when they came almost to the end they turned into a big house exactly the shape of a mouse, with windows for eyes. Inside Billy saw more big cats, middling-sized cats, and little cats than he had ever dreamed were on the earth or in the stars. Some were playing with balls of string, some were sleeping, and a great many were mewling. Really there was a great noise!

"Little girls like it here," explained one little wife with a nod. "Do you like kitty cats, Billy?"

"I like candy best," answered Billy, remembering the delicious smells.

"Is n't that just like little boys!" they all exclaimed. "Well, well! We want you to enjoy yourself, Billy, so we'll go back to the candy."

Then they filled a big basket with the tempting bags and Sand Man put it into the boat.

"Good-bye, Billy, come back soon," the little wives called when each one had kissed him and Sand Man helped him in.

"Good-bye," called Billy, waving his hand toward the star gate as the cloud boat began to rock. "Thank you for everything. Good-bye."

"It's a shame to wake the darlin' when he was smiling so sweet in his sleep," said Nurse Reenie.

"Were you having a nice dream, Billy Boy?" asked Mother.

"Oh, Mother, I've had the loveliest ride with Sand Man. He's all green and gave me smoked glasses to see the stars — and the little ladies gave me bags of candy and — and —"

Billy stopped, for Nurse and Mother were laughing! Of course if they thought he had only been dreaming there was no use telling them any more.

Downstairs Uncle Tom was more sympathetic. "Sand Man!" he exclaimed to the little boy's inquiry. "You just bet there is. I know him well. He's taken me lots of places. You stick to him, Bill, especially if he knows how to run a boat. Can't you give a fellow a bite of your goodies, though?"

"They — they're all gone," exclaimed Billy. "I'll try to save some for you next time."

"Oh, that's all right; don't worry. Just put in a good word for me, though, won't you?"

"Yes, indeed I shall," promised Billy. "I wish he'd take you along, but I don't think the boat is big enough. I'll tell you all about the places we go to, though. Will that do?"

"Sure it will," said Uncle Tom.

III

THE STAR OF HUMPTY DUMPTY

CHAPTER III

THE STAR OF HUMPTY DUMPTY

“GOOD-EVENING, Billy,” said Sand Man.

Billy did n’t see any one, but he had very good manners for a little boy. “Good-evening,” he answered, looking as hard as he could in every direction.

“Just wait a minute, Billy, until I drop a few more grains of sleepy sand into your eyes, then you won’t have the least bit of trouble seeing me. Little boys never know I am around until they are very sound asleep. After that they can see me very well — that is, if I want them to.”

“That’s funny!” remarked Billy. “How can I see anything when I am asleep?”

“Maybe it sounds funny to world people,” answered Sand Man thoughtfully, “but not to fairy people. We fairies know that world people see the most beautifulest of beautiful things after they are asleep. How are the eyes? Can you see me all right now?”

“Yes, indeed! You are looking very fit, Mr. Sand Man. Glad, indeed, to see you.”

Sand Man looked very much astonished at so odd a speech, such a grown-up speech, from so little a boy. Then he laughed. "I see," he said. "Little boys like to say what their Papas and Uncle Toms say. Perfectly correct, too. Yes, I *am* fit. Feeling just bully. That's the same as fit, you know. They both mean — But here we are talking grammar when we ought to be having a good time. Guess!"

"I beg your pardon?"

"My, you are getting grown up, Billy! Most children would say, 'Huh?' or 'What did you say?' But I like your manners." And Sand Man slapped his knee and chuckled to himself. "But as I was saying before, 'Just guess.'"

"I can't guess. I give up," said Billy.

"That's sensible and the quickest way to find out. So I'll tell you right away and not keep you waiting. My sky boat sprang a leak last night. I was taking a little boy to Shut-Eye-Town and a big air wave rolled us right up against a big star. Tore a terrible hole."

"Oh! What was the little boy's name?"

"Sammy."

"Did he like Shut-Eye-Town?"

"You bet! I mean, very much."

"Will you take me, Sand Man?"

Sand Man put both hands on his green knees and laughed and laughed. In fact, Billy thought he never would say anything more he laughed so long. But finally he stopped. "If that is n't like little boys! They want everything on earth — I mean, in the sky. Did n't I take you in my cloud boat to the Star of St. Ives and Seven Wives? And did n't they give you enough stuff to make your poor stomach turn a hand-spring?"

"Yes, but you promised to take me with you again."

"That's right," said Sand Man, suddenly looking serious. "I did promise and that's why I'm here. I'd have come lots sooner, only there are so many good little girls and boys these days. I have been very busy giving rides in my cloud boat. There's Lily Landers who washes and dresses her little brother, and Tom Downing who stopped pulling the cat's tail, and the Hanson twins who used to throw banana skins on the sidewalk and will never do it any more. Oh! I've been very busy."

"I've been good," reminded Billy.

"Well, Billy, that's so and I've tried to get

around to you before this, but I just could not manage."

"You did n't tell me how you got here if your cloud boat is leaking."

"That's so. Well, the boat is at home getting fixed and I came in a flying machine. There! Is n't that a surprise?"



Billy clapped his hands delightedly. "Is n't that fine, though! Is there room for two?"

"Yes, sir! And if you're all ready we'll start right away. Are you?"

"Yes, indeedie!"

"All right. Well, there it is, right behind you

all this time. Give me your hand and then hop up into that funny little seat. That's the way. Now, I'll sit right beside you. By the way, here are your smoked glasses, the ones you wore the other night. You know how the star-shine hurts your eyes when we get very close."

Billy put the glasses on and the flying machine rose like a dandelion thistle when you blow very hard. Right up it went among the clouds and stars, with Sand Man steering it just as easily as could be and making it go just anywhere he wanted.

"Sometimes I think I'll give up my cloud boat altogether and use an airship on my travels."

"Why don't you?" asked Billy.

"Well, for several reasons. The most important one is that the fairies would raise a fuss. Cloud boats are far more fairylike—sort of magical, don't you know—than flying machines. Everybody can see just how these things work, but there is n't a soul can guess how I make the other thing go with only two oars and nothing but air to go on."

"I never could," acknowledged Billy.

"That's just it! I guess I'll take to the cloud boat again as soon as it's fixed. Say!"

"Yes?" asked Billy expectantly, noticing Sand Man was thinking of something.

"I just happened to think. I heard there has been an accident on the Humpty Dumpty Star. Do you care if we go there to-night instead of to Shut-Eye-Town. Poor Humpty Dumpty has sat on a wall for years and years, and he has had a terrible fall, they say. Poor fellow. I'd really like to see how he's getting along."

"Oh, yes!" agreed Lilly eagerly. "Let us go. I'd really love to."

Sand Man turned the big wheel in front of him and the flying machine made a turn to the right, just like an automobile turning around a corner.

"We shall have to be very careful to-night or we'll have another accident," said Sand Man. "The clouds get in front of the stars and I can't see them—the stars, I mean—until we almost bump into them."

"Then we can't see through any of the star gates," said Billy ruefully.

"Well, we might," comforted Sand Man. "I saw through the gate of the Queen of Hearts on my way to your house. It did me good to see the King give the Knave another good beating. It's time the young rascal was mending his ways."

But the clouds seemed to get thicker and thicker, and try as he might Billy could not see any stars with gates in them.

"Maybe I could see better if I should take off my glasses," said Billy finally.

"Oh, no. Don't do that," said Sand Man. "Those smoked glasses that keep the bright starlight out of your eyes are also magical glasses. If you take them off you won't see Humpty Dumpty or anything. You could n't have seen the wives and sacks and cats the other night without those glasses either. Better keep them on. Why, bless my soul, here we are!"

Sand Man stopped the flying machine right at the steps of a big star and Billy hopped off. The shining gate opened itself to let them in and closed again after them.

The place seemed very quiet and deserted. All the houses along the road appeared to be empty and there was n't a soul in sight anywhere.

"I wonder where all the people are?" remarked Sand Man, looking around. "I never saw this star so lonesome. Hi, there!" he shouted suddenly, putting his hands to his mouth and yelling as loudly as he could. "Where's everybody?"

A little man in the funniest red, white, and blue suit you ever saw stepped out in front of a queer-looking house. "They are all at the accident," he said, pointing a finger down the road. "The wall where Humpty Dumpty fell is the one around the palace and they are trying to get him up. All the King's horses and all the King's men are there."

"Let's hurry," said Sand Man, taking Billy's hand, after thanking the little red, white, and blue man for his kindness.

As they ran along the road to the King's palace, they heard a great roaring which they soon made out to be the voices of a great many people.

Sure enough, they soon got near enough to see an immense crowd just inside of a high wall.

"We shall never be able to see anything in that crowd," said Sand Man. "Let's climb this tree and then we can see all that is happening."

Billy could n't climb very well, but Sand Man gave him a boost and in the twinkling of an eye he was sitting comfortably in the highest branches.

Then a wonderful sight met his eyes. In the middle of a great crowd of people there was a golden chariot in which sat the King and Queen, and ten beautiful white horses with jeweled har-



nesses were hitched to it. And on a golden table just beside them was half of an immense eggshell — empty. All over the ground were scattered bits of broken shell and the inside of the egg. Really it was shockingly scrambled. Dozens of men were on their knees with pots of glue trying to fix the



pieces of shell together, others had golden spoons and bowls trying to scoop up the rest of the egg. But it seemed a hopeless task, and the King and Queen were shaking their heads sadly as if they thought it were of no use.

“Poor, poor Humpty Dumpty,” said Sand Man. “They’ll never get him together again. How did it ever happen?” he asked one of the bystanders.

“The King’s jester made a joke about a blue-bottle fly and Humpty Dumpty laughed so hard he rolled from the wall before any one could catch him,” explained the other. “He had sat there for seven hundred seventy-seven years, seven months, seven weeks, seven days, seven hours, seven minutes, and seven seconds.”

“Well,” said Sand Man thoughtfully, “there were n’t any more sevens left, I guess, so he just had to fall off. Speaking of time, though,” — pulling a watch from his green suit somewhere, — “I think we’d better be going, Billy. It’s getting late and Nurse Reenie will be coming in soon to wake — Ahem! I mean we have a long way to go home and it’s a cloudy night and hard steering. Come on.”

And Sand Man and Billy were soon in the flying machine speeding through the sky.

IV
THE CROOKED STAR

CHAPTER IV

THE CROOKED STAR

BILLY and Sand Man were shooting through the sky in the cloud boat, which had been mended.

"You can't see any mended place at all," Billy said when he got into the boat. "Was it broken very badly?"

"Yes, indeed! The bow was smashed in and the rudder was bent and the mizzenmast was all twisted and the right main foresail was torn plumb in two."

Billy squinted upward through the smoked glasses he had put on, for it was a clear night and the starlight was dazzling.

"I don't see any masts or sails," he said doubtfully. "I did n't know there were any."

"There I go again!" answered Sand Man impatiently. "I'm always getting mixed up these days. It must be because I'm so busy. Of course, there are no masts or sails on this boat. I'm thinking of the boat I had before I got this one. It was called 'The Dreamland Boat,' and got wrecked one night when I was taking little Kitty

Patterson and her doll family to see Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary. You see the pretty maids all in a row are dolls, too, and that's where the little girls like to go."

"And did the little girl and the dollies get wrecked?"

"Yes, indeed! But when I found the boat was going to pieces I remembered that the Bird Called a Snipe was living in the star next door, and I knew that he had an extra pair of magical wings, so I went there and borrowed them and fastened them on to Kitty's shoulders and she got home safely."

"Oh!" was all Billy could say to this wonderful bit of news.

"Why don't you ask what became of the one hundred thirty-seven dollies?"

"I don't care what became of them," said Billy. "I don't like dolls."

Sand Man chuckled and slapped his knee as he was always doing.

"Well, I'm going to tell you what became of them, anyway. When they fell through the hole in the bottom of the boat, right through the sky, I thought it was a shame to let all those beautiful dolls go to waste; so, as I'm a kind of a fairy

myself, I caused them to fall very, very softly so they wouldn't break when they landed on the earth, and to drop right into the middle of a street where very poor children play every day, children who never get dollies even on Christmas. When they woke up next morning and went out into the street, there was a grand scramble, I can tell you. They thought it had been raining dolls in the night."

"Why didn't you make the dollies fall down into Kitty's house so she could have them again?"

"Because it was too many dolls for one child to have," answered Sand Man thoughtfully. "Besides, her grandma and aunts could buy her a lot more."

But Billy was n't listening. They were passing a star the gate of which was different from most of the star gates Billy had seen on his travels with Sand Man. The shining bars of this gate were very close together and all over it was a sort of fly screening. The boat was n't close enough for Billy to see inside very well, but he could hear the funniest noises, sounds like growling and barking and all sorts of things.

"What star is that?" asked Billy.

"That 's the Dog Star," answered Sand Man.

"Did n't you ever hear of it? Well, all kinds of dogs, big dogs and little dogs, live there. Some are so little they can crawl through the bars, so they have to put fine wire over the gate to keep them in. There are two or three Bear Stars, too, but I never take little folks there. The bears would n't hurt you one bit, only you might think they were going to, and there's no use going there and being frightened when there are so many nice stars to visit. Every one seems to have heard of you, too, and they are all asking me to bring you around. Little Tommy Tucker, and Old King Cole, and My Son John, and Dr. Foster, and Nimble Jack, and all the fellows are wanting to see you. I'd have taken you to see some of them last time if I had n't been so anxious to know all about Humpty Dumpty's accident. It was nice of you to go along with me. You could not have been very much interested."

"Oh, yes, I was," protested Billy. "I'm sorry he broke.

"Well, well, it *was* too bad. But there's no use crying over spilled milk — I mean spilled egg."

Bump!

"Good gracious!" said Sand Man.

Up beside the cloud boat shot a streak of light.

On, on, up it went to the very top of the sky and then disappeared.

"What was that?" asked Billy in astonishment.

Sand Man shook his head. "I'm not sure whether it was a shooting star or a sky rocket. I'm only glad it hit the side of the boat instead



of the middle or it surely would have poked a hole in it."

"I thought stars shot across, not up," said Billy.

"Oh, they shoot any old way, up, down, across, slanting, any way they want to go. That's one trouble about sky boating." Sand Man looked over the side. "Just a scratch," he said; "nothing to worry about."

"Where are we going?" asked Billy.

"I'm going to let you guess after we get there. I want to see how smart you are. Here we are now, so you won't have long to wait. Hop out, Billiken."

The boat stopped in front of a very large bright star with steps and a gate right in the middle. But the gate was as crooked as it could be. It looked almost like the kind little boys draw on the black-board in school, and the steps slanted dreadfully. When they were inside, Billy looked around curiously. What a funny place it was! The grass looked like millions of corkscrews, and the flowers were so crooked that some of the roots were sticking up in the air while the flowers were blooming in the ground; the trees were twisted all out of shape and the apples on them were

knobby and crooked — worse than any potatoes you ever saw.

And the fences were crooked, the roads were crooked, the barns were crooked, and the very birds and chickens were crooked.

“I know where we are,” shouted Billy, clapping his hands.

“Where?” beamed Sand Man.

“There was a crooked man,
And he went a crooked mile,
And he found a crooked sixpence
Beside a crooked stile,”

sang Billy.

“You’re right,” nodded Sand Man. “You are a very smart boy. And by the way, don’t be surprised when you see the Crooked Man. We are going to his house now. It is n’t that he is crooked that makes him so odd, but he always talks poetry. It just seems he can’t talk like other people. That’s his house away over there. Come, let us go.”

Sand Man took Billy’s hand and they walked along such a crooked road that they almost met themselves coming back. But after a great many twists and turns they came to the house and there was the Crooked Man himself standing in the doorway. He was, indeed, very crooked, but

whether it was because the little boy was getting accustomed to things or because the man had such a kindly face with merry twinkling eyes, I do not know, but Billy began to like him at once.



The man held out his hand to Billy and said, —

“How do you do?

I’ve been waiting for you.”

And before Billy knew what he was doing he answered in poetry too, —

“Why, I ’m very well,
I ’m glad for to tell.”

“Hear that!” spoke up Sand Man proudly,
with a nod as much as to say, “I told you so.”

“Indeed ’n I do,
He’s a dandy all through,” —

answered Crooked Man with a smile. And he
went on, —

“Does he know how to eat?
I ’ve an elegant treat.”

“Try him,” suggested Sand Man. “I never
knew a little boy who could n’t eat everything all
the time.”

Billy followed Crooked Man into the house and
sat down on a very tilty chair at a very wobbly
table while a tremendously crooked black cat
rubbed up against his legs. Billy looked and
looked for the crooked sixpence and the crooked
mouse, but he could see neither.

Just then Crooked Man began to put nearly all
the good things you can think of upon the table,
lollipops and ice-cream cones and chocolate
soda-water and everything.

Then Crooked Man and Sand Man talked out-
side while Billy tried all the goodies. They talked
and talked for a long time and Billy ate and ate

and ate. He was just starting on his second ice-cream cone when Sand Man called : —

“Come along, Billy. Say good-bye to Crooked Man now and tell him what a good time you’ve had. We really must be off.”

So Billy said, —

“I thank you very, very much,
For cakes and lollypops and such.”

And Crooked Man smiled and answered, —

“I wish you would n’t even mention,
Such a very small attention.
If anything can give me joy,
It is to feed a hungry boy.
And so I hope you’ll come again,
Oh, one, two, three, four, six, eight, ten!”

“Good-bye,” said Sand Man.

“Good-bye,” called Billy brightly.

And as they looked back and waved their hands they could see Crooked Man smiling in the doorway of his very crooked house.

V

LITTLE JACK HORNER

CHAPTER V

LITTLE JACK HORNER

SAND MAN lifted Billy tenderly into his cloud boat while the little boy was asleep. They were far up in the sky among the stars when Billy sat up and rubbed his eyes.

Sand Man chuckled softly and slapped his knee. "I surprised you this time, did n't I? You did n't know you were going to have a nice ride to-night, did you?"

"Where are we going now?" asked Billy, still rubbing his eyes and blinking.

Sand Man handed him the magical glasses and Billy hooked them behind his ears as he had done before.

"I thought we would go to the star where Little Jack Horner lives," answered Sand Man. "Is there any place else you would rather visit?"

"Oh, no!" said Billy. "I'd love to see Jack Horner."

Pretty soon the cloud boat stopped in front of a star and Sand Man helped Billy out. The big gate here was opened by a queer little man dressed

exactly like Santa Claus, and Billy and Sand Man stepped inside. At first Billy thought it *was* Santa Claus, and was just going to hold out his hand and say, "How do you do, Santa!" when he happened to look on the other side of the gate and there was another little man dressed exactly the same.

Both the little men had jolly, round faces and looked as glad as could be because company had come. They each made a rather jerky little bow, for their legs were very short, then straightened up suddenly and held their hands to their caps like soldiers while they said a little greeting speech together: —

"We hope you've had a pleasant trip
A-sailing in your noble ship.
So welcome to the Land of Horner,
Though Jack's not sitting in his corner."

"That's a nice verse," said Billy to the little men. "I'm glad Jack is n't in a corner any more because I want him to play with me, and two can't get into a corner. Did you ever play Pussy-wants-a-corner?"

"No, we did n't," said the little men. "Is it nice?" But without waiting for an answer they linked their arms together and marked time. Left,

right, left, right, — march. And they started off, saying over their shoulders, "Fol-low us."

Sand Man put his arm through Billy's and they fell in behind the two little Santa Claus men. The four of them marched along a road with trees on each side full of ripe plums. Finally they came to a house right at the end of the road and the little men stopped.



All at once the front door of the house was opened and a little boy rushed out and down the steps right over to Billy.

"Oh, you nice old Sand Man to bring me a playmate! Now we can have a jolly time. And who do you think is here to-day? You'll never guess. Little Tommy Tucker! Now the three of us can play marbles and Indian ball and hopscotch and have a great time. Hurrah!"

Jack caught hold of Billy's hands and jumped up and down with glee. "Tommy, oh, Tommy, come here and see who's come!" he called to some one in the house.

A little boy with a piece of bread-and-butter in each hand came to the door and looked out. "Oh, stop eating for a minute and come on and play," said Jack.

So Tommy gulped down his bread in two big bites, wiped his crumby hands on his trousers, I'm sorry to say, and came out.

The two little Santa Claus men had disappeared, so Jack put his hands to his mouth and called as loud as he could, "Fritzenherrigen! Wilhelm-vongrünwald! Come here!"

The little men suddenly appeared again and waited for Jack's orders. "We boys want to play, so please take Sand Man and show him a good time. Perhaps he's hungry, so take him into the dining-room and give him a large, fresh juicy Christmas pie to eat. And tell cook to please put three more into the oven, for all of us will want one after a while."

When they were gone Jack Horner took Billy and Tommy Tucker over to a nice, level place in the road, and they played marbles with round, hard plums. It was just dandy! They had green ones for comies, blue for crockies, red for glassies, yellow for agates, and speckled ones for "onions." Billy won all the marbles and his pockets were soon stuffed full.

After a while they quit and played Indian ball, and all got hit and everybody was out. So they started on hopscotch, and Billy's leg was getting pretty tired hopping when the two little men came marching along, stopped, touched their caps, and said, "Pie is served, Master!"

"Goody!" said Jack. "Come on, fellows." And they all went into the house.

Inside, the house seemed to be all one big room, — that is, downstairs. Upstairs likely there were beds to sleep in, but the big dining-room seemed to take up all the space on the first floor. The table in the middle was set exactly as for a birthday party, with pink candles and a fancy cover, except that instead of a cake in the center there was a big pie. Over in a corner stood a large Christmas tree glittering with tinsel and gold paper, gilded nuts and popcorn, and right under the tree was a dear little chair set exactly in the corner. Evidently it was for Jack.

"I never have to sit there any more," remarked Jack. "I got tired of it. Would you like to try it, Billy?"

"Yes, indeed!" exclaimed Billy. And he lost no time in popping right down.

Then a little man in a big white apron and a

cook's cap brought in an immense Christmas pie and set it on Billy's knee.

"Put in a thumb and pull out a plum, Billy!" laughed Jack.

So Billy did so and put it into his mouth.



He thought he never had tasted anything so delicious.

Jack and Tommy sat at the table eating and all three little boys were getting very full when Sand Man came to the door and beckoned to Billy.

"If I don't take you home, Billiken, I'm afraid you'll have — well, I can't say it because it is n't polite, but it rhymes with jelly-cake. Come along."

"Good-bye, fellows," said Billy. "Had a dandy time. Come and see me some day."

Then Sand Man took his hand and they hurried for the gate.

VI

A VISIT TO THE APRIL FOOL

CHAPTER VI

A VISIT TO THE APRIL FOOL

"TO-NIGHT," said Sand Man, tucking a soft warm blanket around Billy in the end of the cloud boat, so he would n't get the grip, which was going around, "we are going to a very funny place. I had intended to take you to the home of the North Wind, but when I saw how it was at your house, with Mamma sick in bed, and Nurse complaining, and Uncle Tom and Papa away, I decided you had been having a hard time of it and needed recreation."

"What is that?" asked Billy.

"It means amusement. You need something to make you laugh and forget your troubles, so we're going on a visit to the April Fool. How's that? Now, what do you suppose that noise is? I fixed that rudder before I left home and there it is flapping again and jerking the boat forty ways for Sunday. My goodness! I hope we shan't get sky-sick! No matter what fun is going on at the April Fool's, we can't enjoy it if our stomachs are wanting to turn somersaults, can we?"

"Maybe we can tie it," suggested Billy.

Sand Man stopped rowing and put a finger to his forehead as if thinking deeply.

"That's a bright idea, Billy. Did you wear your laced shoes?"

"M-hm."

"What!"

"I mean, Yes, Mr. Sand Man."

"Much better. Well, we'll tie one of the strings to that pesky rudder if you can spare it, and you can hold the other end." A few twists with his nimble fingers and the trick was done.

"There! That ought to be all right. Billy, you are such a comfortable little boy to take around. You always make the best of things and you're always ready to help. When you grow up you are going to be what they call a good sport."

"Uncle Tom calls me that now!"

"Right-oh! How's the tummy?"

"It's — it's all right, I guess." Billy was a little pale.

"That's the talk. Well, we're here now, anyway. Let me whisper a little advice, Billy. No matter what happens in here, be a good sport. That means taking a joke, too."

"All right, I'll try," said the little boy.

"Oh, my goodness!" exclaimed Billy the next instant, for just as he put his foot on the first step of the stair something big and bright went roaring by very close. "I nearly fell over!" he said. "What was it? A cannon?"

"No," laughed Sand Man. "That's all right. It's only done to fool people. There is a spring in that step that sends off a sky rocket when anybody comes. I always dodge it and take two steps at a time. I guess I should have told you."

Billy put a hand into each pocket and his head went up. "Oh, I'm a good sport," he said grandly. "I'm not afraid."

Sand Man slapped him approvingly on the shoulder. "Go it, old top, you surely are a dandy. But I'll have to stop using slang or your Mamma won't let you come with me any more. Hi, there, where are you going?"

Billy had seen something interesting and was skipping off across the road. A big bird kite was caught on the lowest branch of a tree and Billy made a run to grab it, but just as his hand touched it the kite rose of its own accord to the next branch. The tree was old and crooked and the easiest thing to climb you ever saw, so with-

out hesitating Billy went up after the kite. But again the same thing happened. Again, just as his hand touched the beautiful red-paper bird, the same thing occurred. Up went the kite — and up went Billy.



The first thing you know he was in the tip, tip, top of the tree, but again, just as he was about to touch that beautiful kite, it went sailing away in the air high over Billy's head.

"Ha — ha," laughed some one Billy could n't see. "Did you ever get left?"

And then, looking down, the little boy saw another boy holding the kite string in his hands and reeling it off at a great rate up into the sky. The bird was a mere speck in the air.

"Did you do that just to fool me?" Billy had started to climb down and Sand Man helped him.

"Yes," laughed the boy. "You'll get accustomed to it if you stay here long enough. Would you like to hold the string a minute?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. May I?"

And the boy generously handed it over.

Billy had five minutes of fun, then Sand Man called him. "Come along now. We must be off."

Billy thanked his new friend and said good-bye. Then he took Sand Man's hand.

"It pays to take a joke good-naturedly, you see," said the latter. "That boy liked you because you were n't angry at his little trick, and then he let you have the kite. Watch out!"

But he was too late. Billy had noticed a little round platform and did n't see any harm in stepping on it. It looked as though it might be the top of a well or something like that. Suddenly it began to turn around, going faster and faster every minute and spinning poor little Billy so rapidly that you could n't tell whether Billy was a little

boy or a sack of flour. But the funniest part of it was that he kept getting closer to the edge all the time until he just could n't stick on any longer and all at once he bounced right off and rolled down a grassy bank into some mud. "April Fool!" cried a voice, although there was no one in sight and the spinning platform had suddenly stopped quite, quite still.

Sand Man was lifting his eyebrows in a queer way as if he expected Billy to cry. But the little



fellow jumped up and did n't do anything but swallow a lot of air to make up for the breath he had lost and rub his knee which had got a terrible bump when he fell off.

"That — that was a funny thing," he said shakily.

"Yes, and you're a sight," answered Sand Man. "I don't see how on earth, — I mean on star, — I can take you to the palace of the April Fool in that condition." But his eyes twinkled as he spoke, and suddenly looking down Billy discovered that the mud had disappeared from his clothes and they looked as clean and starched and nicely ironed as though just out of the laundry basket. You see 'it was magical mud and was never meant to stay. Billy was glad he had n't cried as he had thought of doing for a minute. His knee felt better, too. And what do you think! There was something sticking out of his pocket, too, and when Billy took it out curiously, he found it to be a nice little tin whistle that went like a canary bird.

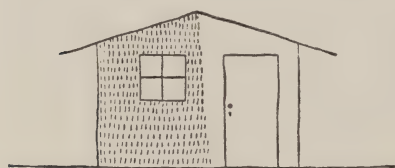
Sand Man nodded kindly. "That's to make up for your rough treatment, Mr. Good Sport. Now, let's be getting along."

Billy had loads of fun the entire way to the palace and he really enjoyed being fooled. A string across the road knocked off his hat and when he went to grab it, it sailed away up in the air with a sound like a fire whistle if you ever heard

one. And then it came down again, right on his head.

He picked up packages that he was sure had something nice in them and found nails and prickly burrs and things like that instead when he untied the strings. He was fooled in so many ways I can't remember them all.

They were getting near to the town now, for there were more houses, the queerest-looking houses they were, and no two alike. They were all of two colors evenly divided in the middle



like this — one side being red or blue or yellow or green, and the other side some other color. And the people nodding a welcome from the windows and porches were dressed in the same odd way, half and half.

Once in town all the stores and buildings, Billy noticed, were done in two colors also, even the fountains and monuments and drinking-troughs for the horses. Then they came to the palace, and what a wonderful place it was, all built of a hundred kinds of colored glass with twelve big towers on top.

They were taken at once to the room where



the April Fool sat on a great, high throne all strung around with bells. Billy and Sand Man knelt on green satin pillows at the foot of the throne and touched their foreheads to the ground three times, for that's the way to do when you call on kings.

"Arise, Sir William Ferguson, and Sir Sand Man Yawnem," said the King, as he touched each of them on the shoulder with a little stick that had bells on the end. "Word of your bravery and good nature has reached the palace and so I confer the degree of knighthood upon you both." And then turning to some of his courtiers he said, "Bring on the music and lots of merry-making, men, also the chocolate sundaes, custard pie, and lollypops for our distinguished company."

And Billy had such a rousing good time that he got tired and went to sleep, and the next day he couldn't remember just how Sand Man got him back to the cloud boat, and who held the flapping rudder on the way home.

VII

THE MAN IN THE MOON HAS A SHOW

CHAPTER VII

THE MAN IN THE MOON HAS A SHOW

SAND MAN came for Billy early one night. "There is going to be something extra special to-night," he explained to the little boy, "and I am glad to see that you have on your best sailor suit with the eagle and anchor on the sleeve. You see, there is to be a movie party, the Man in the Moon is giving it and the invitations say please to bring a friend."

"Oh, goody!" cried Billy. "I just love movies. Do you think there will be anything about Indians or horses or trains? Mamma took me last week to see 'Alice in Wonderland,' but that's a girl's show — except the rabbit: I liked him."

"Really I don't know a thing about it," answered Sand Man. Then he added anxiously, "Say, Billy, how does my green suit look? I ordered a new one, but it did n't come, and this one is all over grease-spots I got fixing that broken rudder."

"It looks very well," said Billy politely.

Sand Man sighed loudly with relief. "That makes me feel better! I told you you were a comfortable little boy to have around, didn't I? Well, I suppose we'd better be going if we want to get there for the first act."

Billy got into the boat and Sand Man immediately began to paddle with all his might through the sky and clouds to the place where the show was to be.

"Are we going to the moon?" asked Billy.

"No, not to-night."

"But I thought you said the Man in the Moon was giving the party!"

"I did, yes, but—oh, didn't I ever tell you? You see there isn't any moon sometimes. And so the Man has to have another place to live. When there is a moon, of course he lives in it,—and a lonely time he has, they say,—but although we have all been after him for years to give it up and live some place else, he still keeps on. He's sort of set in his ways. Hardly any one else will stay, you see, because the moon disappears every so often and it's a nuisance moving every month. So that's the reason he gets lonely."

"What place does he live in when there isn't any moon?" asked Billy.

"Well, he used to tumble down and go to Norwich, but several times he got lost and went south and burned his mouth eating cold pease porridge. I don't see myself how it could happen when the porridge was cold, but that is the way the story goes and the Man in the Moon has never contradicted it, so it must be true. Anyway, he spends about a week every month on a star, and that's where we're going to-night. Here comes another boat. I suppose they are going to the party, too!"

A boat something like their own came near and Billy, who could see very clearly through his magical glasses, recognized the passengers at once. "It's the seven wives from St. Ives," he cried; "the ones who gave me the candy."

"Good-evening, Sand Man! Good-evening, Billy," they called as they passed. "Why don't you come to see us again?"

"I shall, thank you," answered the little boy politely, "just as soon as Sand Man has time to take me. Are all the cats well?"

"Quite well, thank you," they called as they passed out of sight.

A lot of boats were waiting for people at the steps of different stars. In star-land, or rather sky-land, that is the only way one can get anywhere

unless you happen to have a flying machine or a balloon.

"I guess we have plenty of time after all," said Sand Man. "Here comes King Cole, and Jack Horner, and everybody. It's going to be a big party."

At last they reached a big bright star, in front of which was a long line of boats up and down as far as you could see. Billy and Sand Man had to get in line and wait their turn to go in. But the steps were big and wide and the gates were wide too, so they were soon inside and following the people to the end of a street where a great building covered with lights had this sign across the front:—

"VENUS THEATER. M. I. MOON, Manager."

In a little while they were inside, and Billy thought it was the finest place he had ever seen. The carpet and chairs were all of red velvet and the trimmings and ornaments everywhere seemed to be made of pure gold. But he had quite a shock when Sand Man said, "Billy, I want you to meet my friend, Mr. Moon. Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Moon." For if the theater was beautiful, Mr. Moon was quite the other way. Really he was about the

ugliest man Billy thought he had ever seen. But suddenly the little boy felt sorry for him, and he had a feeling right away, too, that he was going to like him very much, for he had a kindly, appealing look which seemed to say, "I know I'm ugly, that there's a boil on my ear and a corn on my chin, just as the Raggedy Man told little Jimmy in the book. And I know that there's a mole on my nose that is purple and black, and my eyes



are so weak that they water and run; but please try to like me anyway, for I like everybody on earth and in the sky. I want to be everybody's friend." Of course the Man in the Moon didn't *say* all this. He just looked as if he would *like* to say it, so Billy smiled and held out his hand as he had seen his Papa do when he was introduced to any one. "Delighted to meet you, sir!" said Billy grandly. And the Man in the Moon shook his hand so long Billy thought he was never going to let go.

"I hope you will enjoy the show," said Mr. Moon, turning to say How do you do to some new people; so Billy and Sand Man passed along down the aisle and got seats in the front row.

Pretty soon the curtain went up and everybody clapped, for there was a big white sheet all ready for the picture; and when the picture began, what do you think it was about! Hansel and Gretel, the little boy and girl who got lost in the woods; and the old witch who lived in the house of sugar and cake. And Billy got so excited when the old witch stuck her head into the oven to see if it was hot enough, and Gretel pushed her in all the way and shut the door, that he just jumped up and down, and Sand Man had to say, "Sh! Keep

still, Billy, or they'll think you haven't any manners."

The next picture Billy thought he was n't going to like because it was about a girl. But it happened to be Cinderella, and when he saw the rats



and mice and the pumpkin changed into horses and footmen and a golden coach, he was pretty nearly as excited as he was about the witch.

When the pictures were done, little boys in red suits came down the aisles and passed lemonade and ice-cream to all the people. That's about

the only way you can have anything to eat at such a big moving-picture party, because if the guests had gone to the Man in the Moon's house afterwards for refreshments there would n't have been room for everybody. So they all sat still and talked politely to the people near them and ate their refreshments and had a very fine time.

Then Mr. Moon got up on the stage and made a speech and said he was glad to have them there, and wanted them to come again, and that he hoped they would all get home safely. Then they clapped their hands again and put on their wraps and went out.

Going home, Sand Man let Billy row a little while. His rheumatism was bothering him in his shoulder where he had carried the bag of sand for so many years, to put into the children's eyes, and pulling the oars hurt him.

Billy said good-night and thanked Sand Man for taking him along when they reached home. It had been a most wonderful evening and he was going to remember it for a long time.

VIII

THE SAND MAN'S STORY

CHAPTER VIII

THE SAND MAN'S STORY

BILLY got the grip, after all. You can call it whatever you like, chills and fever, or a feverish cold, or grip, but anyway, he was pretty sick and had to stay in bed and take three kinds of medicine.

All this time, of course, he had to stay at home — not only through the day, but also at night, for although Sand Man made him little visits he did n't take him anywhere in his boat. "You see!" he explained to the little sick boy, "I can't take little folks with me on my travels through the sky unless they are asleep — I mean, what earth people call sleep. It's like this: Fairies can't mingle with earth people or talk to them until they have closed their eyes and forgotten all about daytime things. And I should be in a terrible fix if on one of our journeys you should waken for a drink of water or something. Why, you would tumble overboard out of the boat in two shakes of a lamb's tail — right down here into your bed. And where should I be? No, it would never

do at all. There you go now. I'll wait until you come back."

Billy did waken just then, and Nurse turned his pillow and gave him his medicine and a drink of cool water. The little boy looked around for Sand Man, but he was nowhere to be seen.

"What is it, darling?" asked Nurse.

"Where did Sand Man go?"

"Sand Man! He is n't here, dear. He never lets big folks see him, you know." She stroked the hot little forehead with light, gentle fingers that felt deliciously cool and soothing. Billy closed his eyes again, and there right beside him was Sand Man nodding and smiling the same as ever.

"I tried to go with you," said he, "but I could n't follow when you woke up. Now, just suppose you had been in the cloud boat! Would n't I have been frightened to death about you leaving so suddenly! But I don't believe you understand what I'm talking about, so I'm going to change the subject. What do you say if I tell you a story?"

"Fine!" cried Billy. "What one will it be? About The Blind Man or The Prince and the Blue Pillow or about Glowworm?"

"Well," said Sand Man, "I had not thought

of those. In fact, I'm not sure that I know them. I'll tell you what I'll do, though. I'll name over all the stories I know and you can take your pick."

"Goody! Maybe you know some new ones I never heard before."

"Maybe I do. Now, let's see. There's The Purple Mouse, and Double Thumb, and The Soldier's Fiddle, and The Golden Horse, and The Enchanted Swing, and Sweet-Throat, and —"

"Tell me one about a little boy."

"Well — there's 'Johnny Jump-up.' How's that?"

"Was he a little boy? I thought that was a flower."

"It's both. In your yard it is a flower, but in my story it's a little boy who went out one day and — But there, there! I see you are going to like it, so I may as well begin at the beginning." And Sand Man crossed his knees just like Papa did when he was telling a story.

"Once upon a time there was a little boy who had a gun given him on his birthday. It was n't a great big heavy gun like his Grandpa's that stood in the corner, nor a little one like his Papa's that was kept in a drawer. No, it was just a nice little

boy's gun that would shoot bird shot and did n't make too much noise.

"For a long time he just tried to hit marks to see how straight he could shoot, and I'll tell you he got so smart with that gun that he could hit the bull's-eye every time. I suppose you'll say that he could n't hit a mark with a shot-gun when the bullets spread out so; but that made it all the easier you see; some of the bullets were sure to hit the place he was aiming at every time.

"After a while, though, he got tired of shooting at pieces of paper tacked around on the trees and he took to aiming at the birds. He did n't mean to shoot any, really, but he would put his gun up to his shoulder and aim, just to see if the shot would go straight if he *should* pull the trigger.

"And do you know he thought so much about it, he got to feeling that he would just have to try and see if he could hit a bird with that gun! So one day, when every one was away, he went out and crossed the cow pasture and climbed a fence and waded a creek and crossed another field and there he was in the big, big woods looking around everywhere for a bird.

"The trees were taller than the ones in the

yard at home and it was hard to see the birds for the thick leaves. He could hear them chirping and fluttering and fussing and see the flash of their wings occasionally, but he could n't get his gun up to his eye in time to get a shot. And then all at once he thought he saw something in a big oak tree and fired.



“Now, it happened that Yellow Cap, court jester to the King of the fairies, was having a nap in a bird's nest. It was this way. He had been up all night at a ball. The King's daughter was going

to marry Prince Goldfish and there had been a big party to celebrate the engagement. All the wood people had been there and all the fairies and elves and goblins and brownies. But never before had a fairy married any one of the water folk, so it was rather unusual to have to ask all the fishes and turtles and frogs and people like that. But they had had the party on an open green place right beside a stream, so that the water people could come quite close and look on. Yellow Cap had been told by the fairy King to try and be as funny and entertaining as he could and to see that all the guests had a good time; so, being a bright, obliging little fellow, he had run from one place to another turning summersaults and jingling his bells and tickling the babies behind the ears until he was about ready to drop. When the refreshments of acorn cake and arbutus lemonade were served, and every one was sitting around with a napkin tucked in his neck and eating for dear life, Yellow Cap had stolen away to a quiet place to have forty winks of sleep.

“So he climbed an oak tree, and on the lowest bough, close up to the trunk, he found an old empty bird’s nest as soft inside as a piece of silk.

He sank into it with a sigh of relief. How comfortable it was! Just the thing he had been looking for! He curled up comfortably like a kitten, his head resting lightly against the edge of the nest and his yellow cap hanging over. In a twinkling he was asleep.

"The plates were lifted and wraps were found for the departing company. Every one said good-night and what a lovely time he had had, and went away. After a while there was n't anybody left. Still Yellow Cap slept. The birds woke up and the sun peeped in at him through the leaves, but he slept on. My, but he was tired!

"It was the middle of the morning when the fairy King's jester was discovered missing. Word was sent to all parts of the kingdom and a general search was begun. Some of the fairies looked among the roots and leaves on the ground, some went great distances along the water's edge and inquired of all the frogs and fishes, and others went to the tops of the trees and looked among the branches. Now, it happened that Clearwing, the youngest daughter of the King, came to the tree where Yellow Cap was asleep and suddenly she spied him. Then she called all the little fairies to come and have a look, too. There was

a great scramble then, I can tell you; some flew, some ran, and some climbed, but anyway they all got there somehow. They were planning just how they could play a joke on Yellow Cap, when suddenly there was a dreadful bang, and a lot of little lead balls shot right into the tree among them.

"Of course you know what had happened. Johnny had seen the tassel on Yellow Cap's hat, and thinking it was an oriole or some other kind of a bird he had pulled the trigger.

"Well, the nest flew to pieces and Yellow Cap got an awful fall, one fairy got a hole through his wing, and one a broken wrist, one got her best white dress torn dreadfully, and another nearly lost the end of her nose. It was terrible for a while, and all from the bullets out of Johnny's gun.

"Johnny did n't know he had hit a fairy; he thought it was a bird he had seen come flopping down, and he started to hunt for it. But it was n't any use, for Yellow Cap on his nimble legs ran like a deer and took a short cut to fairyland.

"Then the fairies held an indignation meeting as soon as they had carried the injured ones home. The idea of a little boy with a gun com-

ing into the woods and shooting at living things! He would have to be punished!

“And this is what they did. They made a net of fine roots and vines and strung it across the path, and when Johnny came along he tripped and



fell. And before he could scramble to his feet again the invisible King of the fairies had waved his wand three times over Johnny's head and said: —

“‘Oh, Johnny jump up and Johnny jump down,
He tried to shoot my favorite clown;
When after this he's hunting game,
I'll make him jump and spoil his aim.
Oh, dillory dock; oh, dillory dare!
Oh, elves in wood and birds in air!’

“‘That ought to fix him. He’ll get so tired of missing everything he aims at that shooting won’t be any fun. Go, now, Mr. Johnny, go home to your Mamma and see if you can’t be a good boy!’”

“And did Johnny stop shooting birds?” asked Billy.

“You’re right he did,” said Sand Man. “He quit shooting everything. It’s no fun when you miss all the time. The fairy King did exactly the right thing. After that, when Johnny would pull the trigger, he jumped and spoiled the whole thing. He thought it was the gun’s fault, for of course he never knew he had shot up a tree full of fairies and that the King had put a spell over him. That’s all,” said Sand Man.

“That was a nice story,” said Billy. “Thank you very much! I wish you would tell me another one some — some —”

Just then Billy opened his eyes and looked around sleepily for something. “Did Sand Man go away?” he asked.

Nurse was standing beside the bed. “Sand Man? The darling’s been dreaming again! There isn’t any one here but me, Billy. Would you like another drink, dear?”

IX

THE JACK-O'-LANTERN STAR

CHAPTER IX

THE JACK-O'-LANTERN STAR

WHEN Sand Man took little Billy on his next trip through the sky in his cloud boat, he told him he was going to give him a big surprise. Billy coaxed and coaxed Sand Man to tell him what it was, but Sand Man said: —

“No, you will enjoy it more if you don't know what's coming. And to tell the truth I don't exactly know what we are going to see, myself. Have you got your magical glasses, Billy?”

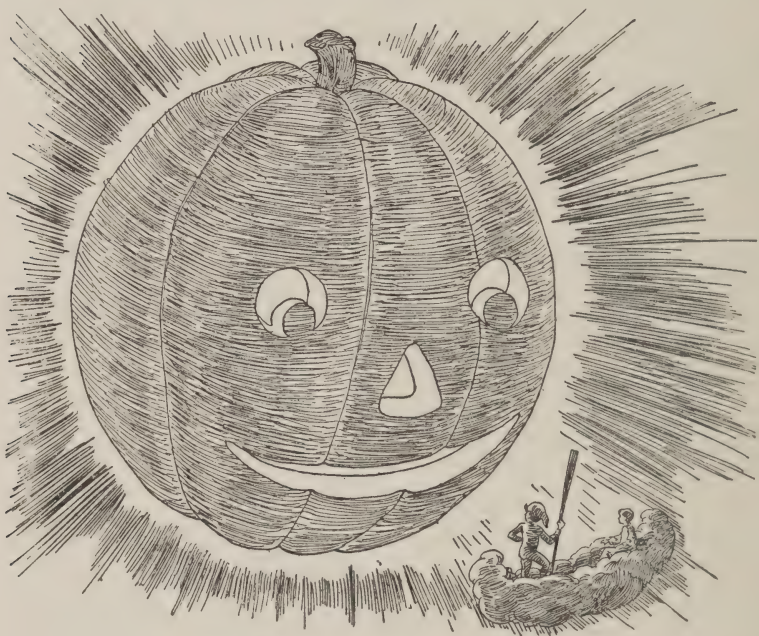
“Yes, here they are. I was just going to put them on.”

“That's the boy! Now, sit nice and still.”

The cloud boat went whizzing along at a great rate and stopped in front of the funniest star you ever saw. It was so big you could n't see to the top and it was round like a pumpkin. It had two round holes for eyes, and another like a nose, and a long, curved slice like a mouth. There were bright lights shining inside and it looked exactly like — now, what do you suppose?

There, you have guessed it as quickly as Billy did. A Jack-o'-Lantern, of course!

"Yes," said Sand Man. "This is the Jack-o'-Lantern Star, and if it's as jolly inside the old fellow as it looks from the outside, we are going to have a fine time."



The cloud boat stopped right in front of the mouth of the Jack-o'-Lantern Star. They could n't see any gate like there was on the other stars they had visited, so they went to the only place they could see to get in.

It must have been the right place, for just inside, when they were fastening the boat with a rope so it could n't get away, a queer little man came up to them and said, "Tickets, please!"

"We forgot to get tickets," said Sand Man, "but can't we just pay our way in?" He reached his hand into one of his mysterious green pockets and pulled out an immense pocket-book.

"Yes, but I'll have to charge you ten cents apiece extra," said the queer little man.

"All right. Everything comes high these days," answered Sand Man, counting out the money.

But Billy was looking right ahead and seeing so many funny things he had n't heard a word Sand Man said.

A big brass band had just come around the corner of a street and Billy laughed and laughed when he saw it. All the men had pumpkins for heads, and they wore suits of big green leaves like there are on pumpkin vines. I suppose I should call it a tin band instead of a brass band, for everybody had dishpans for drums and frying-pans for fiddles, big funnels for horns, and bean-shooters for fifes. My, but they looked funny!

The tin band had a funny drum major, too. That's the man in front who generally has on an

immense high hat and carries a big stick with a knob on it, which he throws up into the air and catches again. Well, this drum major had a sort of a double stepladder instead of a stick, and he would set the ladder down and march up one side and down the other — always keeping time to the music.

When the band had gone, a big torchlight procession came along, and there was so much light Billy was glad he had on his smoked glasses. First came a hundred men with long sticks that had lanterns on top, then came a hundred men with red, white, and blue umbrellas, and everybody clapped his hands at that and so did Billy.

But the next hundred men were the nicest of all, for instead of buttons on their coats and sleeves and cuffs and collars, they had little electric lights like those on a Christmas tree. You can imagine how nice they looked.

Billy wanted to run ahead and see it all over again, as he had done when there was a circus parade in town one time; but Sand Man said they would have to hurry if they wanted to see everything even once.

So they made their way to a big building near by and went inside. There were ever so many

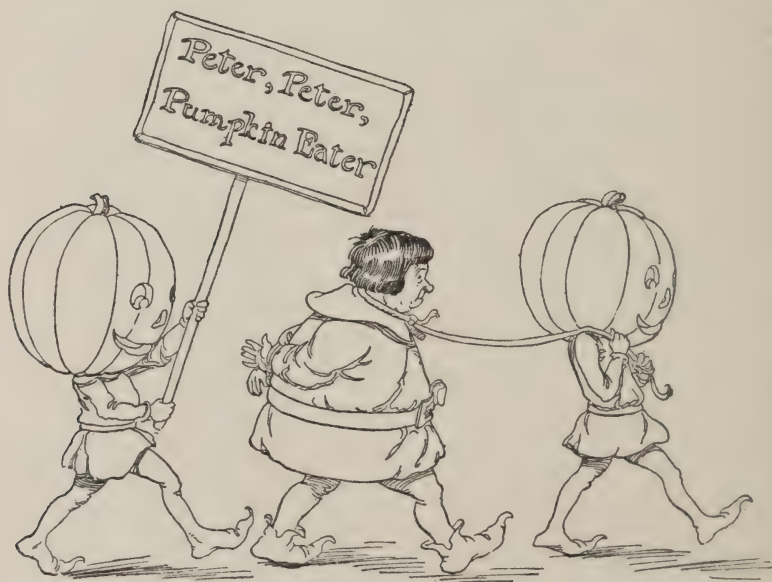
people there and they were all busy making — what do you think? — popcorn, in poppers so big that Billy could have stood up in one. It took six men to shake one popper, and the noise that corn made when it was popping was something awful. It sounded something like a war, Billy thought. Another place they were putting the snowy white things into a bowl as big as a washing-tub, and pouring syrup over it and making it into balls wrapped in bright paper. Sand Man bought Billy two balls, a red and a yellow one, and they went out.

Then the funniest thing happened you ever saw. The clowns came along! A lot of them had Jack-o'-Lanterns for pretend heads, just like the men in the parade, and some had funny false faces. One clown had false ears as big as plates, and he could wiggle them by pulling some strings. Billy laughed so hard at this he nearly fell over. Another clown had a false nose, and it was so long that it curled up over the top of his head like a piece of bologna. And still another clown was dressed like a baby in a long white dress, while its Mamma pushed it in a buggy. The baby and its Mamma, Billy knew, were men, too, just dressed up for fun. Everybody laughed when they

saw the mother's hat. It was a market basket turned upside down with a really live chicken sitting on top. There were so many clowns Billy couldn't count them. Some were dressed like parrots and some like monkeys, but a whole lot just had on funny white baggy suits with big black spots on them and they had their faces painted white and red. They tumbled and rolled all about, and Billy had a fine time watching them.

One clown gave Billy a handful of taffy as he was passing and another gave him some roasted chestnuts.

All at once another band came along. Sand



Man whispered that it was Old King Cole and his Fiddlers Three, but that he must have borrowed some more men because there were ten of them. Old King Cole himself was the drum major of this band and wore a high crown instead of a hat. After the band came a lot of people dressed like pumpkins, and leading another man by a rope. Over this man's head was a big sign on which were the words, "Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater."

Sand Man began to laugh. "They won't let Peter get loose very soon for fear he will eat them. Well, Billy, that's all, I guess. We had better be off. They are putting out all the lights in the houses and everybody seems to be leaving."

So Sand Man and Billy went back the way they had come, got into the little cloud boat and rode home through the sky to Billy's house.

X
ON THE RIVER

CHAPTER X

ON THE RIVER

THE weather was very hot, so hot that Billy could n't sleep at night when he went to bed. Nurse Reenie had gone away, too, and he missed her. No, there was n't anybody sick at home that she had to take care of, and there was n't any little boy or girl that she liked better than Billy, either. That was n't possible, because she loved him almost as much as if he had been her own little boy. But Mamma and Daddy and Uncle Tom all agreed that he was n't a baby any more, and that it was better for him to depend upon himself a little, if you know what that means.

"Put overalls on him and let him run," said Daddy. "He needs dirt to dig in, and sunshine, and exercise, and not so much soap and water nor so many white starched clothes to keep clean."

That suited Billy exactly, of course, for he did n't like to be dressed up.

"And I shall take him for boat rides in my canoe and we'll go fishing, too," said Uncle Tom; "and fishermen can't have nurses around

always telling them to keep clean. They'd scare away the fish."

"Oh, goody!" cried Billy; for he loved to go in Uncle Tom's boat away up the river and around the bend so far he couldn't even see his own white house on the hill. So, although he missed Nurse Reenie, life promised to be happy.

But, as I said, the weather was so hot that nobody could sleep very well, and whether that was the reason Sand Man did not take him for any rides in his cloud boat, or whether it was because he thought Billy was having enough boat rides in the daytime, I don't know. Maybe he thought, like Daddy and Uncle Tom, that Billy was getting too old for nurses and nursery people.

Well, anyway, one night it was so extra hot that Mamma said, "I just can't put Billy to bed for a while, John," — that was Daddy's name; — "can't we fix the swing into a bed out here on the porch and let him take a nap until we are ready to go in ourselves?"

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Uncle Tom. "Let me get the motor-boat and take you for a run up the river and back. That will cool us all off, and if Billy gets sleepy we'll fix a snug little place for him to lie down. How's that?"

"All right," said Mamma.

So it was decided and they were soon settled in the boat — not Uncle Tom's canoe, which did n't go unless you used a paddle, but one that went by itself on the water, just like an automobile does on land. All you have to do is to push a little thing this way and turn a wheel that way and shove something else the other way, and you can make the boat do anything you want.

The river was quite different at night from daytime Billy thought. The water was all black, and the stars and moon seemed to be in the bottom of it. The moon was getting big enough now for the Man in the Moon to move into again, and Billy kept looking over the edge of the boat into the water and wondering if he could pick out the stars he had visited. He was thinking about Jack Horner and Crooked Man and April Fool, and how kind every one had been to him, when all at once something poked its head up out of the water right beside the boat. Billy was startled at first, but on looking closer he saw that the head wore a green cap with a point on top.

"Sand Man," he called delightedly.

"Yes, it's me," answered Sand Man. "I mean, it's I." And he turned his face toward Billy for

an instant so the little boy could see that it really was his dear old friend.

"Where's your boat?" called Billy.

"No good in water," said Sand Man, out of breath from swimming so hard. "My! I wish your Uncle would go more slowly. I want to talk to you." But just then the boat gave another lurch ahead. "I guess I'll have to do it, after all!" And without explaining what he meant, Sand Man suddenly said the magical words, "Maxi, taxi, fisher



flum!" And what do you suppose happened? Billy found himself in the water, not a bit scared, but feeling cool and comfortable and swimming along beside Sand Man as easily as he could swing in the hammock at home. "Now you are a fish," said Sand Man.

"A fish!" said Billy, suddenly feeling an itchy

place on the end of his nose and trying to scratch it.

"Yes, all but your head and arms. I'm one, too. The Queen of the mermaids gave me the power to change us, you see. I never could go to visit any of the stars in the water before, but now I can visit them all. I can put my head under the water and stay down as long as I like and you can, too. Try it."

Billy ducked his head, but suddenly thought of something. "But Uncle Tom said the stars in the water were only pictures of the stars in the sky."

"I know that's what they say," answered Sand Man in contempt; "but they say lots of things that they are not sure about. I happen to know that there really are water stars, so there! But no one except a fairy can tell the picture stars from the real ones. I'm going to take you to a real water star to-night."

"How splendid!" cried the little boy. "And shall we see fishes and shells and things?"

"We shall see what we shall see!" said his guide grandly. "Now, duck your head and wiggle your tail and swim downward like I do. That's the ticket!"

And Billy found himself in the cool depths of the water, able to see everything perfectly, with

starlight overhead and starlight underneath and the shining sides of the silver fishes gleaming like lanterns to light the way.

Down went Billy and Sand Man through the moonlit, starlit water. Never had Billy been in such a beautiful place before. The river, although it looked all black on top, was altogether different underneath. Somehow it made Billy think of a jewel his Mamma wore in a pin at her throat, a moonstone pale blue and misty, and the little diamonds set around it were just like tiny stars.

And there were wonderful water creatures that stared at them with great round eyes! Red and blue fishes and golden ones striped with silver, and rainbow-colored eels and river crabs of every color.

"Do you like it?" asked Sand Man.

"Yes, indeed," said Billy. "It's just like fairyland."

"It *is* fairyland," said Sand Man. "This particular part of the river belongs to the mermaids and they have it all fixed up to suit themselves. It is their garden, you see. They have fishes, though, instead of birds; just as your orchard and garden on the hill have robins and bluebirds and woodpeckers and orioles and dozens of other beautiful

birds, they have different kinds of fish. They have flowers, too, although they also are different from your flowers. When we get to the bottom of the river you will see them for yourself."

"What water star are we going to?" asked Billy.

"Bless my soul, if he is n't getting curious," laughed Sand Man, wiggling his fish tail in glee. "I suppose it's time to tell, though. Why, we are going to the Mermaid's Star on the bottom of the river! How does that suit you?"

"All right," said Billy. "But Uncle Tom said mermaids would n't let little boys see them!"

"You're not a little boy. You have n't any legs, have you? You are a mer-boy now and I am a mer-man. They'll let us in all right, don't worry about that. Watch out there! That fish nearly put your eye out with his sharp tail."

As they got near to the bottom, the pale, misty light got brighter and clearer; not a golden light like the star-shine in the sky, but a wonderful silver light that was different from anything the little boy had ever seen. It came from a great house that was all built in points like a star, and the windows were so close together that you could scarcely put the tip of a finger between them.

Billy wanted to stop and look at the wonderful things he saw, but Sand Man gave him a little shove with his fin—you know what a fin is, don't you?—and said reprovingly: "It is n't polite to stare through people's windows, Billy. Let's go and ring the bell. But I suppose they know we are here because they can see out as well as we can see in. By the way, I did n't bring your magical glasses because I did n't have a pocket. Does the light hurt your eyes?"

"No," said Billy, "not a bit."

"I thought it would n't, because, when I turned you into a mer-boy, that was supposed to fix your eyes, too, so you could look at everything. Now, mind your manners! We're going around to the front door."

Sand Man was right when he said mermaids have gardens. There were flower-beds of every shape you could think of, with thousands of blooming flowers of all colors. They were different from earth flowers, but just as beautiful, and some were a great deal larger than the biggest sunflower you ever saw. There were even great trees of flowers, and flowering vines growing over arbors and pergolas. If you don't know what a pergola is, get some one to tell you, and then

you 'll know how beautiful the place was. And the front porch and door and steps, and in fact all of the house that was n't glass, was of glistening white marble that was so wonderful with the silver light all over it, it would have hurt Billy's eyes, I 'm sure, if Sand Man had n't used his magic.

"Oh, my!" said Billy. "Oh, my!" — just like that. He was really getting almost dizzy with so much beauty and brightness.

"See!" said Sand Man happily. "Did n't I tell you! Now, we 'll swim up the steps and ring the bell. That 's the proper way to visit people."

But they did not have to ring, because the door was opened for them instantly by a shad (that 's a big fish) all dressed in a blue velvet suit and silver bells that tinkled when he moved. He stood on the tip end of his tail and bowed so low before Billy and Sand Man that he almost made a perfect hoop, and to tell the truth Billy was just thinking of giving him a little push, when he rolled away himself and all his bells jingled.

Billy looked around. They were in a beautiful hall made of all colors of marble, with stairs that were carved out of immense sea-shells, and rows

of fish — dressed up like the shad in velvet suits with bells — stood in long lines bowing before Billy and Sand Man.

Then a mer-man came through a door at the right, — or swam through, I should say, — and said to please follow him. So they swam right after him into a room so big that Billy thought it must be about a mile wide and a mile high. There were mermaids everywhere here, some singing,



some playing harps, some braiding their long black hair with flowers, and others making crowns out of periwinkles. At the end of the room was a high throne, and on it sat the loveliest, kind-

est-looking lady Billy had ever seen except his Mamma. She was just like the other mermaids because she had a fish's tail instead of feet, but her hair was golden instead of black, and she had great blue eyes.

"Come here, Billy," she called, smiling. All at once Billy was n't the least bit afraid, but swam right over to her, and she put her arms around him and kissed him. "You are a dear little mer-boy," she said. "I am so glad Sand Man brought you. Now, we want you to have a good time; so, as soon as Pinfin takes you to the dining-room and gets you your dinner, I will have Purpletail take you up to the nursery where the little mer-children are playing, and you may play games if you like until Sand Man is ready to go home with you."

And, indeed, Billy had a wonderful time eating — no, not fish — mer-people don't eat fish — but roe pudding and seed cakes, and water ice better than any he had ever tasted, and oh, lots of things.

And the little mer-boys let him ride their sea horses, and they played see-saw and water ball with him, and let him use their sliding board, which was just dandy when you had a slippery

tail, and there was games and everything. They were having a splendid time when some one touched Billy on the shoulder.

"I don't want to go home, Sand Man!" said the little boy sleepily.

Papa gathered him up in his arms as Uncle Tom's boat bumped on the shore. "The little man's been away on travels again, has he?"

And Billy was just going to tell him how he and Sand Man had been to the Mermaid's Star at the bottom of the river when he fell asleep again.

XI

THE SANTA CLAUS STAR

CHAPTER XI

THE SANTA CLAUS STAR

"I THINK," said Sand Man, "that while the weather is so warm we had better hunt a cool place, so I am going to take you in my cloud boat to the star where Santa Claus lives. He does n't live there all the time, for his regular home is at the North Pole, — every one knows that. But he has another home, too, like the Man in the Moon, and that's where we are going to-night."

"Is that why you brought that big pile of coats along?" asked Billy, pointing to the bottom of the boat where there were ear-muffs and mittens and arctics and big bearskin coats.

"Yes," answered Sand Man. "I was thinking of taking you to the Star of the Four Winds, and making a call on North Wind in his ice palace, when it occurred to me that South Wind might see us and get jealous, and blow with all her might; her breath would just about smother us wrapped up in these furs and things. That would n't do at all when we are hunting cool places; so as

Santa Claus had asked me to bring you, I decided that this was a very good time."

Billy was very greatly pleased and excited, but just a little bit nervous. He loved Santa dearly and thought he was the kindest, nicest person there was almost, for every Christmas he gave Billy such wonderful presents of trains and animals and toys; but Mamma and Daddy had always said very positively that Santa Claus did n't like little boys to see him, and that he would n't leave a single thing if he, Billy, did n't go right to sleep like a good little boy. So how would Santa Claus like it if he found a little boy looking at him now?

"Don't you want to go?" asked Sand Man, seeing him hesitate.

"Yes, indeed! But won't Santa be cross if I look at him?"

Sand Man chuckled and slapped his knee. "Well, you are smart to think of that! But I shouldn't worry if I were you. It just happens that Santa Claus is a most, *most* particular friend of mine, and everything that I do is all right. I'll tell you a secret if you don't tell. Every Christmas I go around with Santa and help him. Why, without me he could n't do a thing! I am a sort

of a scout, you see, Willie Winkie and I. We go on ahead and look around and tell Santa when the coast is clear, and when he can safely go into the houses where the children are asleep. Wee Willie Winkie tells me the children who are n't asleep and I do the rest. You've heard about Willie Winkie, have n't you?

“Wee Willie Winkie runs about the town,
Upstairs and downstairs in his nightgown.
Peeping through the windows,
Calling through the lock,
Are all the babies in their beds,
Because it's eight o'clock!”

Billy clapped his hands. “Do you know any more, Sand Man?”

“Barrels, but I have n't time to tell you just now. We're there!”

The boat stopped in front of a great star that glowed with a bright red light.

“It's different from the rest, is n't it?” whispered Billy.

“Christmas color, you know!” said Sand Man, tying to the dock and helping Billy up the steps.

Now, what do you think they found for a door-bell? You'll never guess. A great big bunch of sleigh-bells that jingled so loudly when Sand Man shook them that Billy was glad he had ear-muffs

on. Oh, yes! I forgot to tell you that they had put on the warm things in the boat and Billy looked like a regular little Esquimau.

And then Billy had the surprise of his life. Santa Claus himself opened the big front door



and told them to "Come in," in a kind voice that seemed to have a laugh in it. Billy had expected rows and rows of servants to meet them and usher them into the presence of the great person as they had in the Mermaid Star; but here was the wonderful man himself, with his little black, stubby pipe and a smudge of soot on his nose, just as he looked in the pictures. And all at once Billy did n't feel a bit afraid. He walked right up and said, "Hello, Santa!" just as if he had been talking to one of the fellows. He did n't even

say, "How do you do" or "Good-evening," as he always did to Sand Man.

"Hello, Bill," said Santa, shaking hands. "Sandy here been treating you right?"

"Yes, indeed," said Billy, trying hard not to look around at all the wonderful things he saw. "He's my good friend and we have been lots of places together."

"That's what I heard, and I thought it was time he was bringing you here. Sometime he can bring you to my North Pole home, too, but I thought you'd better come here before anything happened to his boat. It's getting old and shaky."

"This is a nice place," said Billy, his eyes as big as saucers.

"I kind of like it myself," said Santa. "The world was getting so full of good children I had to hunt more room. The North Pole was chuck full of storehouses where we put all the toys we made and there was n't room for one more thing, so I built some more new storehouses here, and the reindeer like it here, too, for they get a certain kind of juicy grass that does n't grow on the earth and that is n't killed by cold weather. Are you warm enough?"

"Yes, indeed, thank you!" said Billy.

"Then come along and I'll show you everything."

They were in a beautiful place all covered with white, glittering snow, except one green field with a fence around it where eight tiny reindeer were grazing. There were big green pine trees everywhere, too,—Christmas trees, you know,—growing right up out of the ground, and they were loaded with toys and tinsel things, candy and nuts, just like your own tree at Christmas. Billy could scarcely take his eyes off them, they looked so grand.

"Would you like a present?" asked Santa.
"Take anything you like."

"Oh, may I?" cried Billy, instantly deciding on a boat as big as himself that had three beautiful white sails like one he had wanted for a long time.

"Yes, but we are coming back this way, so you had better leave it here. Come along with me and I'll show you where my storage house is, and the toys I have for the good children next Christmas."

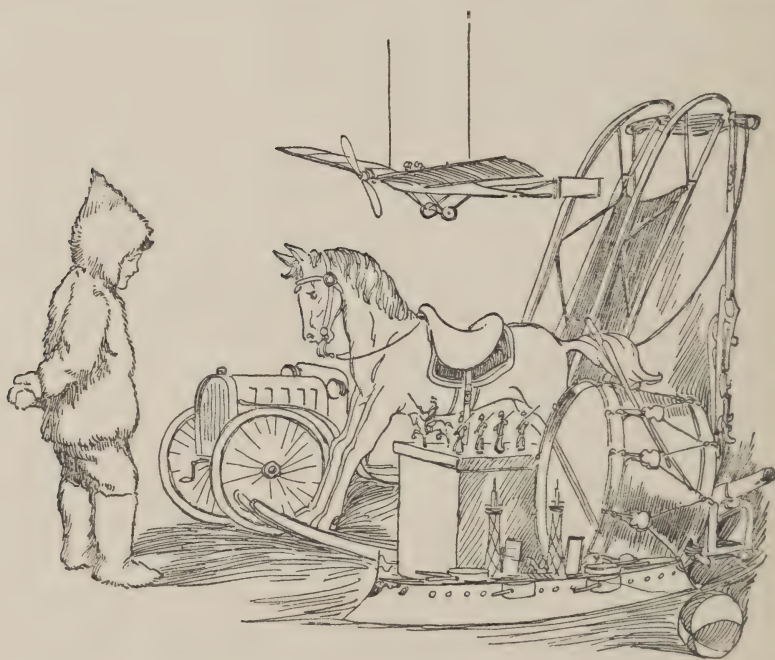
Right ahead of them Billy saw a sort of hill which appeared to be made of solid ice. He was very curious about it; it seemed rather mysteri-

ous. Toward this they made their way, Santa on one side, Sand Man on the other, and Billy in the middle. Finally they reached it and Santa stopped, saying loudly, "I will, O hill, that you take Bill!" And before he knew it Billy was whisked up through the air right up to the top of the ice hill, where there was a little flat place with a big brick chimney sticking out of it. He was wondering if he was to be left there alone, when all at once he heard Santa Claus down below say, "Take Sand Man, too, when you get through!" And in a twinkling Sand Man was beside him. "Now, please take me, that will make three!" cried Santa, again in poetry. And almost before the words were out of his mouth Santa Claus was there, too.

"We have to slide down the chimney to get inside," said Santa. "I do it to keep in practice; you've no idea how hard it is to get down some of the chimneys nowadays. Now jump together." And Billy found himself floating downward through the big chimney into the mysterious ice hill, just as Alice fell down the rabbit hole in Wonderland. You know the story, don't you?

They went down and down, and finally landed

gently in a great big fireplace in a most wonderful room. It was just like a great big store with cases of beautifully dressed dolls and rows of pianos and doll furniture and dishes for little girls. But as they wandered down the aisles, Billy saw all sorts of things for boys, too, — rocking-horses and



soldier suits, drums and lead soldiers, battleships that could really shoot, and toy flying machines that could really fly. There were skates and sleds, wagons, tricycles, and real automobiles. Everything you could think of, in fact.

"Do you see anything you like better than the boat, Billy?" asked Santa Claus.

Billy shook his head. "No, sir. I've wanted a boat just like that for ever and ever so long. Uncle Tom and I saw one just like it in a store one day."

"All right, Billy. We'll get it when we go back and Sand Man can put it in his big boat for you."

They stayed a long time in the ice house, and while Santa and Sand Man talked about grown-up things Billy was allowed to play with anything he fancied. Then Santa told them some stories of his travels. But it was getting late, so after Santa Claus had shown him the room where his busy workers were making things, and the place where he slept, and the place where he sometimes kept his sleigh and reindeer, and his big sack hanging on a nail, he said some more magical words and they were whisked up the chimney and down the ice hill again and were soon on the road to the big gate. Billy got his toy boat, and Sand Man helped him into his cloud boat after they had said good-bye to Santa Claus and thanked him, after promising to return some day.

And when Billy opened his eyes in his own

little bed, lo and behold, there beside him was the very boat Santa had given him. Yet it looked, too, like the one Uncle Tom and he had seen in the store window.

XII

THE SOUTH WIND

CHAPTER XII

THE SOUTH WIND

“WHERE to?” asked Sand Man.

Billy had not been in the cloud boat for a long time, and it seemed ages since his kind little friend had taken him to see Santa Claus.

To-night he was overjoyed to find himself in his old place with the soft comfortable cushions all around him. Sand Man was holding out the magical glasses and Billy put them on.

“Where to?” repeated Sand Man. “I’m going to let you pick your own place to-night because I may not get around again for a while. I’ve just discovered a whole bunch of good children who must have rides and I’ll tell you it’s going to keep me busy. I’ll slip off whenever I can, of course, and take you for a spin, but if we want to do any visiting we had better do it to-night. Can you think of any place you want to go, Billy?”

“I don’t know,” answered Billy slowly; “any place at all.”

“Tut, tut, tut, that won’t do! Now, try and

think. Here, put on this thinking-cap. It's magical just like the glasses and may be it will help you out." He handed him a little round blue cap and Billy put it on.

"Oh, I know!" exclaimed the little boy instantly. "The place you spoke about the other night—the Star of the Four Winds! Please, Sand Man, may we go there?"

"To be sure," said the little man. "But if we visit all the winds, it would take us a day and fifteen hours; so how would it do for us to pick just one of the winds this time and leave the others for another trip?"

"All right," cried Billy, — "which one?"

"We shall have to draw lots. Here you are." Sand Man held out four little feathers and told Billy to take one. Billy chose a brown one all speckled with black. "What does it say?" asked Sand Man.

Billy spied a tiny paper tied to the end of the feather and on it was a name.

"South Wind!" he cried.

"Good!" said Sand Man. "I was hoping it would be that, for I'm sort of chilly. I have been afraid of tonsillitis this changeable weather, and that suits me just finely. Now, give me the

thinking-cap and I'll put it back into my magical pocket; the feather, too, and I'll put it away."

Sand Man looked at a compass he always carried. "South by southeast," he muttered as he turned the boat. "All aboard for the Star of the



Winds. All aboard!" he called, and Billy laughed delightedly.

"This is better than playing train on the back stairs," he said.

"You're just right," grinned Sand Man. Just then a great gust of wind set the boat to rocking so violently that Billy almost fell out, and something whizzed past with a roar. Sand Man shivered. "There goes North Wind, so let's hurry. It's better to go when he isn't at home. They

are all so jealous of each other, these winds, especially the North and South Winds, and I hate to cause trouble. You'll like South Wind, Billy. East Wind is the limit, though, always crying; and West Wind is really quite fierce, always boasting and blustering. But I'll let you judge for yourself. It is n't far now."

They reached the star in a few minutes and Sand Man tied his boat. The big gate was wide open, so they went right in.

It certainly was a queer-looking country, with two wide roads crossing it in the middle so that it looked like a big parchesi board. The four corners were the homes of the winds, and you would not have had to guess long which was which.

A great palace all covered with ice and snow and surrounded by trees with bare, black limbs was where North Wind lived; a dismal, gray-looking house with a thundercloud over it was where East Wind lived; and a great, rambling, old place almost shaken to pieces, with broken windows and torn curtains and awnings, belonged to the rowdy West Wind. But Billy and Sand Man were making their way toward a beautiful white house with green shutters, that had red and

pink roses climbing over it everywhere. The perfume was very sweet, and already Billy was sniffing.

“South Wind’s house,” announced Sand Man.

The sky here was bright and blue and the grass was very green and covered with millions of tiny flowers. Besides, there were fountains of clear water splashing among the trees and they could hear birds singing sweetly and see the flash of their wings as they flew about.

“What a nice place!” cried Billy.

“Thank you!” said a sweet, musical voice, and at the same time Billy felt a pair of lips soft and warm and fragrant pressed against his cheek.

“Who—who is it?” he asked, surprised, for he could not see anything but a sort of white mist that floated all around him.

“This is my friend Billy Ferguson, South Wind,” said Sand Man, smiling, as if there was a joke about it.

Then Billy saw the white mist taking form and becoming plainer.

And before he knew it the most beautiful lady stood before him, all dressed in misty, white, floating robes that blew gently about her. In her long, golden hair were flowers, in her eyes

was reflected the blue of the sky, and her smiling lips were very, very red.

"I love you!" said Billy frankly. "You are the prettiest lady I ever saw — except Mamma."

And all at once a strange thing happened to Billy. South Wind gathered him up in her warm, white arms and flew away with him. She took him on the most wonderful journey. First they went down deep into the heart of a red rose, and South Wind gave him a drink of dew; then she fed him honey from the hollyhocks, and gave him a





ride up and down on a tall, white lily stem. When he was tired, she gave him a drink of poppy juice and rocked him in her arms while he slept, and when he awakened she put him on the back of a large turtle and gave him a ride across the water in a fountain.

And the birds talked to him and told him tales of their travels until he forgot about everything else in the world—or in the sky. Time flew very fast to the little boy in this wonderful place.

“Billy!” cried Sand Man, “where in the world are you? We must be going home.”

And just then Billy came riding by on a big pink flamingo with South Wind floating alongside.

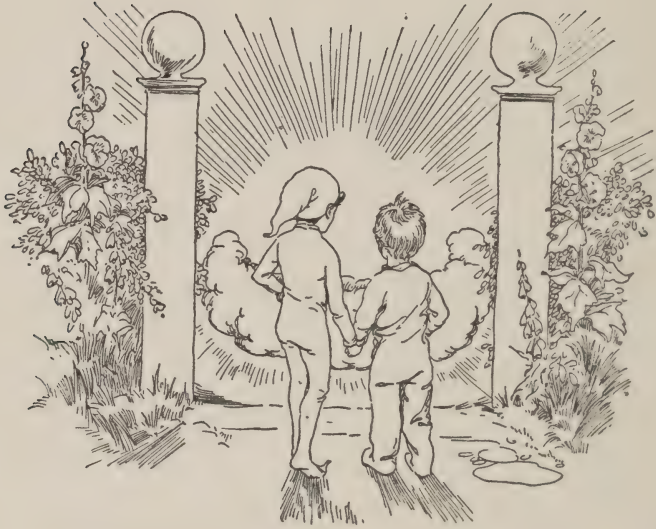
“Here I am!” cried Billy. “South Wind says I must come again. Will you bring me, Sand Man?”

“Sure I will,” agreed his friend, “when the busy season is over and I have more time.” He lifted Billy gently off the bird, and South Wind kissed the little boy good-bye.

“Don’t forget me, Billy,” she said wistfully.

“I’ll love you always!” cried Billy, flinging his arms impetuously around her neck. “Good-bye.”

Sand Man took his hand, and together they passed down the road and through the wide gate where the cloud boat was anchored.



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